



Department of Justice

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CHICAGO AND TENNESSEE MAN CONVICTED FOR VETERAN'S UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION FRAUD

HARRISBURG - The United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania announced that Earl Lafayette Hall, III, age 38, previously of Chicago and Arlington, Tennessee, was convicted on Friday, November 22, 2019, by a federal jury on 2 counts of conspiracy, 12 counts of mail fraud, 10 counts of money laundering, and 4 counts of aggravated identity theft. The charges related to a veteran's unemployment compensation fraud scheme. The five-day trial was held before United States District Court Judge Sylvia H. Rambo in Harrisburg.

According to United States Attorney David J. Freed, Hall was previously sentenced by Judge Rambo to 116 months' imprisonment on February 16, 2018, and his wife, Renita Blunt, age 35, was previously sentenced to 22 months' imprisonment on January 17, 2018, following their conviction after a jury trial on March 10, 2017. In that trial, Hall was convicted of conspiracy to commit mail fraud, conspiracy to commit money laundering, mail fraud, money laundering, and aggravated identity theft. Blunt was convicted of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and aggravated identity theft.

The couple appealed their convictions to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, arguing that their trials should have been severed from one another and conducted separately. In August of 2019, the Third Circuit ruled in their favor by vacating their convictions and ordering they be retried separately. Blunt's re-trial is currently scheduled for January 6, 2020.

The evidence presented during the trial showed that Hall applied for and received approximately \$70,000 in unemployment compensation benefits under the Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service Members Program, commonly known as "The UCX Program," under the assumed identities (first name, last name, date of birth and Social Security Number) of six other individuals. The UCX Program is a federally funded, U.S. Department of Defense program administered by the States. The jury found that Hall fraudulently obtained the benefits paid on five false UCX applications submitted to Pennsylvania and another UCX application submitted to Hawaii in 2013 and 2014.

“It takes an especially devious and brazen criminal mind to defraud a program established to benefit those who have sacrificed so much for their fellow citizens,” said U.S. Attorney Freed. “Fortunately the Defense Criminal Investigation Service, the United States Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the United States Postal Inspection Service and numerous other federal, state and local partners were on the case. Hall’s criminal conduct has now been recognized by two separate juries of his peers, and we look forward to presenting our arguments at his re-sentencing.”

“The conviction announced today is the result of a joint effort by the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Middle District of Pennsylvania,” stated Special Agent in Charge Leigh-Alistair Barzey, DCIS Northeast Field Office. “The DCIS is committed to working with its law enforcement partners and the DOJ to protect the integrity of federally funded programs, such as the UCX Program, which provides unemployment benefits for eligible former service members who are unemployed following their separation from military service.”

"Earl Lafayette Hall III misused the identities of others to submit counterfeit forms and steal money intended for individuals who experience unemployment after serving in the U.S. Armed Forces," stated Acting Special Agent-in-Charge, Derek Pickle, Philadelphia Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General. "We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to investigate those who exploit the Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service Members Program."

The investigation was conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Labor Racketeering & Fraud Investigations, the U.S. Defense Criminal Investigative Service, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Harrisburg with the assistance of the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Internal Audits Division, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Unemployment Compensation Benefits and Policy, and the Pennsylvania Department of Treasury, Office of Unemployment Compensation Disbursements. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kim Douglas Daniel prosecuted the case.

A sentence following a finding of guilt is imposed by the Judge after consideration of the applicable federal sentencing statutes and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines.

The maximum penalty under federal law for each conspiracy, mail fraud and money laundering offense is 20 years of imprisonment, a term of supervised release following imprisonment, and a fine. Under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, the Judge is required to consider and weigh a number of factors, including the nature, circumstances and seriousness of the offense; the history and characteristics of the defendant; and the need to punish the defendant, protect the public and provide for the defendant's educational, vocational and medical needs. For these reasons, the statutory maximum penalty for the offense is not an accurate indicator of the potential sentence for a specific defendant.

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